

ON A PROPER EDUCATION
FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PEOPLE.
by Samuel Nott, Jr.

Delivered.. American Institute of
Instruction... Boston, August, 1835.

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BY SAMUEL NOTT, JR.

DELIVERED BEFORE
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION.
AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING.

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*Price
2.00*

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EDUCATION FOR AN AGRICULTURAL PEOPLE.

THOUGH I am to regard the agricultural population, I must of course involve the principles on which all classes are to be educated. For the points at which all men unite are far more numerous than those at which particular classes of men are divided. I shall not allow myself to forget my appropriate subject, and shall as specially as possible confine myself to it; but I shall do my work very badly, if with all its speciality, its great principle shall not be found applicable to people of every class.

There is another light in which my limit seems no limit—in which I may consider myself as speaking for the people at large. In all countries, and especially our own, the agricultural people is *the* people. Magnify as we may each other interest,—commercial, manufacturing,—they form but small fractions of the mass—themselves proceeding from, and intimately bound to, the agricultural population, and receiving their character from it. Increase our manufactures and commerce as we must, they can never employ a tythe of the community. Our increasing millions must be chiefly agricultural, forming the nation, and governing the nation. Yes—governing the nation. In all countries, and especially our own, weight is in numbers. The agricultural population do and will, directly or indirectly, govern the country. The farmers will regulate or distract manufactures or commerce—will secure or disturb our civil polity. If they originate no governmental acts, when they do but act or decline acting upon propositions of good or evil, their decisions form the issue of every proposal. If the breath, whether of patriotism or faction,

whether of wisdom or folly, proceeds from some other region, it blows in vain until it moves the level surface of society. On its agitation or quiet must depend the result. Whatever good or ill are now prevalent among us, the agriculturists have welcomed; whatever have been missed, they have rejected. Whatever is to be feared or hoped for awaits their decision. In proportion, therefore, as we discover the just principles of education for an agricultural people, do we provide for the welfare of the whole.

I feel myself, then, entrusted with the solemn, I may say sublime, duty of attempting to point out a proper education for this great and growing people. Would that I might be enabled to do it in such a manner as might prove a seed of blessing for ages which are yet to come.

We must keep in view that the question before us regards the agricultural people as a body, and of course that it is not answered by any direction which goes to elevate some portion of that body, whether to commercial, civil or literary pursuits. That is the proper education which shall be of the greatest benefit to the mass who must remain in the lot of their inheritance. Such an education, no doubt, will give sufficient scope for all changes needful to the well-being of individuals and society at large; but our design is to provide for the mass — to exhibit the *proper education* for those who remain upon the soil.

Nor is the inquiry answered by a direction for any particular period of life. Our inquiry must not be confined to the mere matter of *early* education, certainly not of school education — an education which a Legislature can institute, and which schools can execute; but we must speak of an education which must be received and cherished by the people themselves in all the stages of their lives. No community can be properly educated, where education is not carried forward and matured in the succeeding periods of life, where education in later does not lead an education in earlier life, where in school and after school it is not self-cherished and self-matured.

We cannot suggest an effectual plan for mere early education. We must provide for the education of all ages, in order to secure the proper education of the young. Our design is to promote education on those broad principles which will secure it in childhood, and give it fair

proportion and growth and endurance in after life; to educate according to the terms of our subject, not merely the *children* of the people, but the *people* themselves. I shall consider a proper education for an agricultural people to be such as is suited to their *opportunities*, their *condition*, and their *duties*.

I. A proper education for an agricultural people is one for which they have an opportunity. It is such as they can get. It is practicable in their lot. Of course we preclude immediately all that education — be it what it may — which requires childhood, or youth, or manhood to be wholly or chiefly occupied in receiving instruction; and we admit only what can be obtained in the midst of bodily labor, commencing with the early years of childhood, and abiding until old age, under the fulfilment of the doom from which our free institutions cannot release us — “in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread.”

Having assumed this principle, it remains to unfold, as far as may be, the opportunities of an agricultural people. Of all professions whose duty is bodily labor, none affords a better, probably none affords so good, an opportunity for both early and later instruction — an opportunity which we may hope every attempt to unfold may make to be better improved.

So far as formal arrangement is concerned, the common school system, where it exists in full operation, is adapted to the people — is their proper social opportunity. A school occupying ten or eleven months in the year — the one half of the time under a female teacher — and designed principally for children and the young, to aid the labors of their parents in the house and field — the other under a male teacher, and designed with the young especially to afford an opportunity, during the season of agricultural leisure, to the elder youth, seems to me in its arrangement according to the employment of the people, and in its giving the combined advantages to the using all of male and female influence, to be the true system.

I conceive that the subject assigned me grows out of a defect of education perceived in the system as it exists; and the remedy proposed must be in the instituting of a better system, or in some suggestions for the better working of that acknowledged to be inevitable to the employment,

We prefer the latter ; and we claim of course of families, of the primary schools, of the winter schools, of society, such an education, according to their opportunities, as will grow and flourish though the schools be interrupted, and when at length the grown up youth are fully engaged in their laborious calling. Specific rules, good in specific cases only, cannot prove a leaven for the whole mass. I shall therefore only give the following general directions :

1. It must be, with reference to what is expected from schools, *parental*. Whatever may be true as to that unnatural education, which, whether from necessity in the lower orders of towns, or from choice in the wealthy, gives children's whole education to teachers, there is no agricultural opportunity which can supply parental lack — none which teaches the three or four first years on which all depends, or supplies the inevitable intervals of schools in later years. However difficult to secure it, the lecturer on the proper mode must demand (whatever of *the* school house) certainly of the families of every district, that the teacher of that primary school begin and cherish the education for which they look to the school house. Such is God's appointment for all — and above all to an agricultural people. Our great mistake has been to overrate the common school system. A universal admiration of it has paralysed the parental arm, without whose aid no proper education can be given.

2. It must regard subjects of present interest and use. The opportunity lies greatly in this, whether of learning or teaching : the boy has no need to lack a teacher, and the teacher will have no uninterested scholar, when the subject, for instance, is the bee-hive, or the poultry-yard, or the fish-pond, or the spared bird's nest, or the coming or gone by menagerie. The children will not be unobserving, whose capacity of observer is so cherished — will not hate reading, whose reading is diverted to matters of so deep and present an interest. New occasions will be constantly occurring which shall promote observation and reading, and of course a knowing and growing mind.

Nothing, perhaps, would promote observation and thought, more than the early habit of keeping a journal of some agricultural department. I have known children deeply interested and greatly aided by so simple a labor as

a journal of the poultry-yard, or the garden, or the corn-field.

3. As far as education is prospective, it should regard their future line of life, as laboring agriculturists.

I mean not to hinder free scope to peculiar disposition or opportunity for other employments, but regard the certainty that the great mass *must*, and of consequence that each individual *will probably*, follow, and most advantageously follow the calling of his birth. This being the true view of the case, the opportunity corresponds to the motive and the end, and by that correspondence is increased. The range of education in this view embraces all that is needful in agricultural life, and all that can prepare one to know or devise the best methods of doing it—a subject, plainly, which can only be begun in childhood or youth, and the value of which must be manifest more and more every step of advancement. It is scarcely possible that preparing for practical purposes or duties that can never be finished, that agricultural families should be much other than studious—that they should do otherwise than fill up their intervals of labor with profitable study. The ordinary dulness proceeds from prospective studies for no definite and manifest purpose, which have no proper bearing upon their preparation for these employments. An agricultural class book—far better than a political class book—is, I believe, yet a desideratum in our schools. No book could be more interesting, or would be more sure to be the manual of after life, even though its possessor should become the prisoner at last of the crowded city.

An education upon subjects of present interest and use, and for future use in their line of life, would not only be more sure both of teachers and scholars, but would be more likely to be such as could be *used*. Alas! what a calamity has often occurred to the well-educated son and daughter of the farmer, if, indeed, without regard to present or future use, the forms of education may have been given them. From dear bought opportunities, and with far fetched knowledge, they return with an education fit only to be given to the winds, not to grow and thrive amidst the demands of their calling.

4. The pursuits of the family and district must correspond with the pursuits of the school.

If, as we have said, rural education must be in a great degree parental, because the school opportunity has necessary interruptions, then must parents and elder brothers and sisters keep their own knowledge fresh and growing, that they may be qualified to render household aid. Again, if a district would have prevail a spirit of improvement among the young, notwithstanding the hindrances peculiar to their lot, they will not fail in their desire, if such be the spirit of the neighborhood. Without this spirit, and the habits to which it will give rise, not much can be hoped for by any plans for the improvement of the people. With them, what may we not hope for, when we reflect upon the facilities which remain amidst the toils of agricultural life.

In the first place, on the supposition of both a competence and a spirit of improvement, what an opportunity have parents, sweetening their own toil, to cherish various knowledge and just principles in their children. To an uncommon extent, their children labor with them, and in circumstances which favor conversation. The religious direction given to an agricultural people illustrates the opportunity for the salutary intercourse on all subjects which belong to their line of life, and directs how any deficiency of education at the schools may be remedied by the incidental conversation at home: "Thou shalt speak of them to thy children when thou art sitting in the house, and when thou art walking by the way; when thou art lying down, and when thou art rising up."

Again, what opportunity is furnished, both to parents and their children, of useful reading. A book, at once useful and entertaining, aids the midday rest — renders even the season of special toil the season of improvement — while the winter's evenings are the farmers' peculiar opportunity for gaining all wisdom and knowledge, that they may be communicated to his children. No line of life — certainly of a life of labor — furnishes so fine a field for training the minds of the people, provided only that with schools the best that can be procured, the district pursuits correspond.

If one phrase be given as the guide to our present requirement, it would be — that in order to a proper agricultural education, *the district must have habits of reading.*

I take it for granted that a library exists, embracing the best writers in history, politics, morals and religion, and in the sciences peculiarly connected with agriculture ; that all pursue to some extent those subjects which are of common interest, and that everyone gives free scope to his own peculiar taste, and becomes able to contribute his share to the information of the neighborhood. Poetry especially, deriving its beauty from the scenes of nature, and its value from the deep philosophy which it thus adorns, cannot fail to interest and improve such a neighborhood. Taste is indigenous in the country ; it can, it does spring up in the farm-house ; often, but not always, — yet so often as to show how fitted are the works of our highest poets to rural life, — producing a refinement of thought and feeling beyond what is always seen in the *elite* of city life.

The habit of reading newspapers will not answer the purpose. I used to say in an early period of my life — “ When I have read a newspaper, I don’t know anything.”

In that medley reading, he who has not yet learned to select and reject almost intuitively, who has not learned the happy art of forgetting as well as remembering, will either gain no knowledge, or such confused and indistinct impressions, as are worse than ignorance — must be more and more ill educated, the more he reads and the longer he lives. On the other hand, in the reading of continuous works, each new page renders the lessons of the *past* more distinct and abiding ; while the growing materials become the subject of reflection, and the source of wisdom, and the means of preparing the faculties for new acquisitions and new reflections. The mind *thus* trained will even gather much from the newspaper itself, no longer the minister of confusion, but aiding a well regulated mind.

I have already suggested, as a help to early education, the keeping of a journal of some agricultural department. It belongs to this article to require it also of the heads of the establishment, to call for it as the custom of the district, at once for their own benefit and as an example and encouragement to the young. This work alone would cultivate the habit of regular mental employment, would exercise observation and reflection, and would, while nourishing every faculty, furnish constant materials for improvement in the occupations of rural life. If a high example

be needed to give weight to this recommendation, we have it in our beloved Washington, the first of American farmers. His agricultural journals occupy volumes, and no doubt he was indebted to his studious care of his domain, for that matured wisdom which fitted him at length to guide the affairs of the nation.

The utter worthlessness of the school-house to the purposes of a proper education, when unaided by the family and neighborhood, is manifest in a thousand school districts, which nevertheless value highly, nay, overvalue the common school system; and who take all possible pains, at least so they think, to secure a good school for their children. Yet do they give their own testimony against themselves, ever complaining, and that most justly, that there is no worse place to bring up a family in than this same district; because, good as is the school-master, and good as is the school system, and good even as is our blessed America; the school-master and the school-system and the school-providing country cannot do that part of education which belongs to the family and the neighborhood. Find the district where the pursuits of the school are not exemplified in the home and neighborhood, where study is unknown, where history is too dull, and Milton and Thomson and Cowper are uninteresting; — where Addison and Johnson and all English Classics have given place to the people's newspapers, and the children's story books, and you shall find the district where a proper education cannot be given.

I venture the prophecy that there will never be a good school or good education in such a district, come from what named school the teacher may. The plants cannot be well cultivated and thriving which lie drenched in such a stagnant pool. It is beyond my power to propose any place which shall give a proper education at the school, if such education is not fostered by correspondent pursuits at home, and in the district. I cannot lay down a proper end for an IDLER'S DISTRICT!

5. I am not transgressing my limit, and certainly not departing from my character as a country minister, when I refer to the sabbath, as the opportunity especially of our agricultural population. If the sabbath was made for man, it seems the peculiar boon of the husbandman. The

command for its observance presents the scene of a rural sabbath, in which, the husbandman, and his son and his daughter and his man-servant and his maid-servant, and even the cattle which aid their toils are at rest. Then from the nature of man, thought, reflection, meditation, either on the good or on the evil are spontaneous — the mind expands when the pressure of care and labor are taken off. Then there is leisure for reading, to aid and direct the expanding mind. Then too, there is leisure and opportunity for social intercourse, when from the scattered farm-houses there meet an assembled multitude with kind greetings and conversation, and for worship and instruction; for lectures on the most ancient of all books, an encyclopedia of popular knowledge, of history, prudence, moral and religious. The demand is plain, for such an education will enable an agricultural population to avail themselves of this divine arrangement, I will not say now, for securing their religious interests, but for perfecting education, for perfecting the work of the family and the school-house, for gaining those habits of quiet thought, and considerate reading, of attention and intelligent hearing, of reflection, and of communication, for which such an opportunity is provided. If I may assume that public worship, including at once the offices of devotion and instruction hold the prime place in the sabbath opportunity, then is it obvious to claim those growing studies which can alone prepare a people to receive with advantage the proper communications of the pulpit, those rich and extended and various communications, of which the scriptures themselves are the specimen and the guide. Often, often is this christian ministry straitened in following even the simplicity of scripture; its easy course of history and natural science and divine philosophy, — because the narrow minded public seems prepared for little more than the common place of a technical theology, or is prepared to condemn as unscriptural the discourses which follow the large and free views of the scriptures themselves. Happy wherever there may be found those “noble” hearers who search the scriptures daily for the further apprehension of those various truths which, imitating the sacred volume, it is the will of the ministry to unfold.

I will not fail to take the natural reflection which here

comes back upon my own profession, the educators, as truly as the religious instructors of society. For so has God ordered it, that those whom he has appointed for man's spiritual and eternal benefit, have, more than any other profession, the opportunity of cultivating the mental faculties, of furnishing the growing mind and directing it to the best methods and to the most ample stores of improvement. Here, as in all directions, is the scriptural assurance true, that godliness is profitable for the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. The ministers of religion have never been backward in the direct care of rural education. What we here regard is the indirect service to be rendered, by the example of a love of improvement, of studious habits; by their repeated applications to the public mind in their proper calling. What range of instruction is afforded within the all-pervading principles of our faith! What opportunity we have of exciting inquiry, of awakening thought of opening new sources of improvement to every person, of giving a direction to conversation and reading.

The influence of the christian ministry in promoting a good rural education, is aided greatly no doubt by the social intercourse and example of a minister and his family, when such a family is itself a specimen of the mutual improvement of parents and their children together, themselves too, aided by and aiding the neighborhood in which Providence has cast their lot. Happy when the clergyman's family are nobody of the country town, nor on the other hand hunters for good society out of their usual range; but without refusing or disregarding the advantages of a wider intercourse, are still lovers of their country and find their best friends and dearest associates in the well improved companions of their rural walks. These aids to the education of the people, by the rural clergy, are no doubt hindered now by their present uncertain residence and frequent removals, and can only be rendered to the best advantage, when though change be allowed as the exception, permanence is adopted as the rule — when the common understanding is, that his charge is the minister's abiding home.

Let it not be thought that we limit our claim upon rural clergy, to their own parish boundaries. Let us rather

assign to them also the high office of aiding or checking that metropolitan influence which for better or worse, is ever tending to expand itself over the community — the office shall we say, of senators to accept or reject the legislation, readily and eagerly proffered from the proper centres of action and energies : — not by their own vote but by exemplifying, and promoting through the land a wise, sane and independent mind. Then only can this office be well performed, when there shall be found scattered in our quiet country parishes, not only men diligent in their loved duties, but many made more conspicuous by their wisdom, knowledge and faithful devotion to the public good, than they could be made by the most elevated stations — men capable of influencing not merely their own locality, but the generation in which they live and the generations which are to follow.

But we obtain some further light by considering a proper education as befitting the condition of an agricultural people. It should be fitted to make them most comfortable, contented and happy in their line and lot of life.

I speak of the rural community as a body, and as such to remain in the lot of their inheritance as laborers on the soil. It is to be expected of course in that free state of society where agriculture has profitable intercourse with all other interests, that peculiar inclination, or talents, or circumstances, will, whether raising or depressing them, bring many from agricultural into manufacturing, commercial or professional life. It is right, that all professions should be connected with the root and foundation of society, and that the heights of society should be ascended from the farm-house. Our inquiry regards not these special cases; but the unexcepted mass of the people. No education can be more improper than that which keeps the eye ever open upon other employments, which lures the imagination ever with the advantages of other employments, which sets other employments in contrast as to advantages and enjoyments, with the actual employment to which the life is allotted; and that is, on the other hand, a proper education which makes men most comfortable, contented and happy in their actual lot. On this principle we have the following directions. A proper education for an agricultural people proceeds, on *motives* belonging to their lot in life, and aims at *purposes* attainable in that lot.

It is plain to every person at all familiar with the state of agricultural society that there has been and is, a strong action of motives without their peculiar lot; an extensive feeling among the youth, that there were other employments far more desirable; that agricultural life yielded less rewards, and was beset with severer toil, and difficulties, and was less honorable, more degrading than other professions; that it was a profession to be endured, not to be chosen. Hence, the grumbling about the hard lot of working men found its way down to the farm-house, the peculiar seat of contentment. Hence, frequent changes of employment, without due cause, among those whose opportunity of thrift was in the calling of their fathers. Hence, the foolish efforts at gentility, and at genteel employments, which spoiled the minds and injured the prospects in life of the young families of the wealthier sort of farmers. No motives can be worse, than those which cherish unattainable desires, false hopes, vain attempts to change employment and even discontent and envy — and which leaves each rising race uneasy and dissatisfied in the profession of their fathers; each new race of fathers striking daily the note of complaint at the hardness of their lot.

Perhaps of these motives without their lot, the chief has been that which has been so often repeated, the opportunity of advancement to the highest stations or the greatest wealth, afforded by our republican institutions. The constancy of its repetition implies that it has some effect, and if it have, must it not aid the tendency to prefer some other lot, and dissatisfaction with one's own, and the neglect or misemployment of the means of happiness which belong to the general condition of our rural population or to each individual, peculiar opportunity. The possibility of becoming a Franklin, a Sherman, or a Gray, is no available motive with the mass of the people, except in the way of displacing motives indigenous to their lot; except by substituting airy castles in place of the solid and certain advantages of agricultural life. What those solid advantages are, those motives indigenous to the condition, will not fail to appear, while we attempt to describe such an education as shall best secure comfort, contentment and happiness in agricultural life.

Of course the first direction is, that education should be

such as to guide and aid labor to the best account ; such as at once to make agriculture more easy and more productive. I am sure that the general impression of society on this subject, as well as almost universal practice is very defective. Agriculture needs and admits an appropriate education, which may be gained without teachers and schools ; but is more likely to be begun and afterwards well pursued in proportion as it should be aided by teachers and schools. Let the rudiments of agriculture be taught ; let the proper books for gaining further knowledge be pointed out. Let the connexions of mechanical and chemical philosophy with the labors of the field be understood. Let the prejudice against "book learning" be discarded, and our rural population would rise rapidly to better method, and to a more comfortable state of life ; while a proper study of their own profession, would greatly improve their faculties and make them more and more capable of all other knowledge.

Knowledge is power ; and the education of an agricultural population should be such as to increase power by knowledge. How knowledge is power in agricultural affairs is everywhere manifest in the uses of the lever for saving and multiplying manual strength. No limit can be set of course to the power which education may confer, which education may add to agricultural life, beyond which it cannot multiply its comforts or diminish its labors. If the faithful application of science has introduced a hundred fold comforts to the farm-house by the machinery of the manufactory, may not a more extended and practical knowledge of what is adapted to their own employment, in like manner augment their direct comforts, and increase the means of procuring comforts from without.

It were not to be despised, if an education adapted to the condition of agricultural life, did but give with the same wealth more health, leisure and information. The most serious disadvantages of agricultural life certainly are its own work, especially perhaps to the mothers of young families, and to youth at the period of their most rapid growth—its absorbing of leisure, and its hindrance from both causes to acquiring information—for such disadvantages in practice, needlessly or not, it certainly has. If possible, and we believe it possible, because we have seen

examples of the fact, let education be such as shall prepare farmers for the labors of the field, that they may know how to accomplish the labors of each season in its time without the hazard of a broken constitution and to bring on their sons to the labors of the field without breaking their spirits or their health ; and to give to wives all needful aid, in that most difficult and important period of life, when a young family is raised.

But a proper education regards more than securing wealth and health and life and limb, than the mere supply of the animal necessities, even the making life as agreeable as possible. That is not deserving the name of education which provides only for a livelihood, a boon secured by mere instinct to the meanest animal. Education of man must provide for the well-being of man — for the refined enjoyments of the man, for the higher senses of the body, and for all the faculties of the mind. This is true not only of the higher classes — against which if we had them by hereditary descent, I have nothing to say ; but it is true of the working classes. The working man is not educated properly as a working man — unless he is trained to the enjoyments of a man.

I need not dwell at large upon what is perfectly obvious, the pleasures which an improved and improving mind will find in reading and conversation and in those reflections which belong only to improved and improving minds. They are but savages themselves who claim that savage is as happy as civilized life, and that the well informed and studious are no happier than the boor in his chosen ignorance. The happiness of improved and improving minds is within the reach of the agricultural population, and that is not a proper education for them which does not furnish them this happiness. Reading, reflection, conversation, such as belong to improved and improving minds, are the peculiar boon of the country. The absence of variety, of objects to stimulate curiosity, leave the mind free to read the works of the wise and good of all nations and of all times, given as they are to the farmer in his own mother tongue — his accustomed solitude and quiet give scope to his own reflections upon this growing knowledge. While his opportunities of conversation in his family and neighborhood are just frequent enough, to make it ever

agreeable. Not to dwell upon the pleasures of reading and thought — how are those pleasures diffused and multiplied by conversation in the family and neighborhood. The family needs not ingress or egress for its amusement or delight, for it lives, farmer-like, “within itself,” and so much the better, as a youthful race grows up into the enjoyments of their parents. And the neighborhood is not *dull* for want of good society, as some exiled citizens may think; but glows daily with the pleasures of sensible and refined conversations — such as often is not in the saloons of wealth and fashion, and often is, in the calm country retreat, in the farm houses and groves and fields and lanes of our rural districts.

But when I speak of an education, to make rural life as agreeable as possible, while I require suitable reading, reflection, conversation, I am desirous to insist on one particular, more likely to be left out of view; I mean that agricultural education should prepare the people for their own peculiar enjoyments, to take delight in rural life, and especially in their own rural home.

As to the general delight in rural life, it can hardly fail to follow, from that study of agriculture for other purposes which we have already commended. I am not afraid to say, that there is no employment of man so likely to grow in one’s affections, as he endeavors to learn to carry it on to the best advantage, as agriculture. Other employments are regarded more for their profits; but this from step to step, as one tries to improve it, more and more interests and delights the mind, while its results are ever furnishing the finest pictures to the eye.

But I am yet more desirous to see cherished a special fondness to one’s home, for the enduring scene, its rocks and rivers and hills and vales, its orchards and groves, as they were to the eye of childhood and as they will remain to the eye of old age, and for that new and improving scenery with which industry and taste will adorn the cottager’s acre, and the wealthy land-holder’s domain. To regard fields and forests and hills and valleys and rocks and rills and rivers; to be capable of investing the home of labor or of wealth with new and changing beauties, to delight in gardening, husbandry and tree planting, to love with a cherished fondness the ancient and growing beau-

ties of a home ; to acquire the capacity of leaving it with reluctance even at the call of necessity and duty, and the consequent power of making another home, the source of similar enjoyment. These, though missed sadly in all our rural districts, are most important objects of rural education. If our rural society must roll on unceasing to the wilderness, it were well if every wave might bear the love of an early home, and a desire to renew, though at the farthest west, that early home ; if distant emigrants might find and bequeath to posterity a country and a home. I cannot conceive the man to be a man, a whole man, in whom the love of nature about his birth place has not awoken, and is not cherished — cherished by himself, and whom it does not lead forth to beautify and adorn the spot, which though it were but for a year he calls his home ; and which if our tossing sea has sickened will not revive again and live in some beloved home. Let the love of nature and of home and of country revive everywhere, and bless our eastern lands, and establish families and communities in beloved homes even to the farthest west. Thus, shall our country assume in the progress of its rural civilization the outward form of Paradise, which can never be given to the brick and mortar of the city ; thus become the quiet garden of a peaceful and virtuous population.

The proper education, in this particular, may be greatly aided by a right course, in those farmers who rise to considerable wealth. Nothing is more silly — nothing, in truth, more vulgar — than the attempts we sometimes see in such cases, to lay aside country vulgarity. Nothing is more ridiculous than the ill-taste of the family of a wealthy farmer, when the parents are mainly occupied in showing off their flock of young apes ; whose whole influence in their rural neighborhood, is conveyed in the silly apery of city fashions and city manners. On the other hand, farmers whom providence has blest with wealth, need not be restricted to the narrow expenditures of their poorer neighbors ; but may expend in good taste, and for good purposes, in a manner which shall at once benefit the circumstances of the community, and be a safe and proper example for imitation by the poorest of their neighbors, according to each one's degree. The expenditure of thousands in the increase of real comforts and conveniences, and in an extended hospitality,

in the increase of books, maps, and all materials for the improvement of a family and the neighborhood; the improvement of lands and grounds, in view of permanent profit and enduring beauty, would be an example which, in their degree, all might imitate. Such example was rendered, on the highest scale, by the father of his country — the plainest of all farmers — in the wise, useful and tasteful expenditure of a princely establishment. His fondness for agriculture, his love of rural life and of home, would have made him the more humble copy of his own high example, had his been the lot of a working farmer. "The more I am acquainted with agricultural affairs," said that true farmer, "the more am I pleased with them; insomuch, that I can nowhere find so great satisfaction as in those innocent and useful pursuits. In indulging these feelings, I am led to reflect how much more delightful to the undebauched mind, is the task of making improvement on the earth, than all the vain glory which can be acquired from ravaging it by the most uninterrupted career of conquest." With such a spirit, he could have found a delightful home, had his been the lot of a working farmer. Around his more humble dwelling, and with the labor of his own hands, he would have made a humble copy of the taste and beauty of Mount Vernon.

I cannot forbear here the expression of the wish that we may have increase among us of the class of *gentlemen farmers*; by which I mean only farmers whose wealth prevents the necessity of their daily labor, but who prove themselves, like our noble Washington, to be gentlemen by the excellence of their principles and pursuits. The concentration of wealth about our cities, and the constant breaking up of wealthy country families, and their final exile from their homes and from rural life, deprives our wide country of the advantage which would be afforded by ancient and venerable establishments; conspicuous examples of all that is excellent in husbandry, and of all that is valuable in intellect and morals; touching the surrounding population with an influence less despotic, less presumptuous, and more propitious than is now too often exercised by the passing citizen, or the aristocratic gentry of the store, or the factory, or the professions.

III. The proper education of an agricultural population, must regard their appropriate duties — *must be such as will enable them to do the duties of their lot.*

Whatever limitation to the mere knowledge of their trade might seem worthy on other grounds to be allowed, would be removed by the consideration that the agricultural population is entrusted, like all other portions of society, with *domestic education* — the education of the rising race; and from their numbers, of course, with the education of the mass of the people. If the agricultural community is ill-educated, then are the people ill-educated. Incompetence and neglect here, weakens and diseases the living body of society. In view, then, of a duty common to every class and to every family — but more important in the mass than in any fragments of society — what is the proper education of an agricultural people?

In answering this question, briefly, as we must, we say that a business committed to all classes, and for the most part to those who are literally to eat bread in the sweat of their brow, does not demand what the author of their allotment has denied — viz. the leisure universally allowed to the learned professions, or which wealth bestows; nor any learning for which such leisure is indispensable. Yet must we claim, since it is committed to beings capable of increasing knowledge and skill, that every parent, even down to the lowliest cottager, is bound to labor for growing knowledge and skill, and from step to step to take the utmost pains to know and do his duty well. Hence we must require that all parents should have — and if they have not, be studiously and earnestly acquiring — such knowledge as will enable them to further the education of their children on the scale of their instruction in the rural schools; and that every attempt to elevate the standard of common education, be understood and welcomed as a demand for a corresponding elevation of parental education; and that every family press forward modestly, conscientiously, diligently, perseveringly, not only at every public demand, but with spontaneous desires and efforts.

It is a part of this demand that an agricultural population should acquire as extensively as possible those just principles of education which, easily attained by all minds, are not to be separated from popular and prevailing error

without design and care ; that parents should be ever attempting to increase their own store of knowledge, so as to be ever capable of interesting and instructing their children in all the old, and in all the new that may arise. How important, especially — not a literary, not a learned, not a lady-like, (those are not the words) — but a considerate, a reflecting, a studious, a cultivated, refined, and sensible mother ; a mother capable of winning and keeping the confidence of her children ; of securing *honor* from both sons and daughters as they rise to manhood and womanhood. Such a mother have I seen, not unfrequently in the farmhouse, herself bred in the farmhouse, and inheriting the cultivation and refinement of many generations ; the helpmeet of a father, not a stranger to out-door toils and cares, yet the fit companion of a cultivated woman — her fit associate in training intellect, and taste, and religion in the children, thriving like olive-plants round about their table. Delightful instances occur to my mind, where the working father and mother have been surrounded with sons and daughters, versed not only in all common education, but in the histories and classics of their native tongue ; where, not distant from the plough and the spinning wheel, the most liberal studies have been pursued, and the most refined conversations enjoyed ; scenes which intercourse with other countries and many cities, and with the refined and intelligent of the highest classes, has not cast into the shade.

But duty has a wider claim upon the education of an agricultural people — viz. that it be such as shall promote and secure the best state of society ; thus giving promise of blessing to future generations. We have a conception, at once, of what makes a good state of society in each local vicinage, and which being extended over all the rural districts, would concentrate blessings upon the masses assembled for the purposes of manufactures and commerce. Individual character is formed upon high and noble principles, if not in every instance, yet so numerously as to influence the entire mass. There is the predominant influence of worthy men, diffusing through society thoughts of whatever is lovely and of good report. Social intercourse is kindly and cheerful, and for purposes worthy the high endowments of men — is fitted for the growth, improvement and harmony of the moral and intellectual powers.

Union exists where union will best promote the social interests of society, and retirement, private or domestic, in all those things which nature has willed to the care of the individual or family. Hence libraries, and literary and religious societies, for the support and the use of public institutions, that the united cloud may drop as the rain and distil as the dew; and on the other hand, the habits of personal reading and reflection, and of domestic education, by which only public advantages are appropriated to the people. Hence the condition of a well-informed and considerate and virtuous people — people prepared to meet all the emergencies of their lot. The promise of good to such a people is met by candor and good sense, and is welcomed or rejected according to its merits. The *old* is not rejected as dross because it is old, nor the new welcomed as gold because it is new. There is nothing to discourage improvement, for such a people have daily experience of its possibility and value. There is nothing to encourage innovation, for they will not have forced upon them what is contrary to their intuitive reason, to the wisdom of revelation, or the lessons of human experience. The press, with its power of multiplying infinitely any proposal, and the mail, by carrying it to every hamlet and every house, shall have the opportunity of diffusing life and light to the remotest bodies of society, but shall in vain attempt in politics, morals, or religion to toss the people like children to and fro.

If a furnace heat accumulate in every metropolis, and throw abroad its sparks and coals over all the land, they shall fall among a people whom they cannot set on fire of evil, yet ready even from the smallest spark to kindle and glow, in every work of glory to God, of peace on earth and good will to man.

Without a proper education in this respect — an education securing a good state of society — without an education to candor and good sense, to kindness and good neighborhood, to good judgment and stability and virtue, to a power of welcoming all improvement, of rejecting all innovation, to that control of the passions which can preserve a people from becoming the victims of novelty or sympathy — without these demands, the press and the mail may but serve to bring the caprices and sympathies of society into as rapid movement as if the mass of millions were wrought upon

within a single village or city ; may but serve to scatter fire brands, and wrap the country suddenly in a common flame, or cover it with the fragments of an universal explosion.

Or if society be preserved from conflagration or explosion, it is easy to see how an ill-educated, an ill-principled people will make curses of these blessings, will blight and blast their glorious opportunity. The places of social influence, the seats of education, and the learned professions, how would they be filled by such a people ? how be filled by the suffrages of ignorance, and caprice, and passion ? How by such a people may their lights be made darkness ! Boasting of improvements, but the victims of every innovation ; patients to every quack ; clients to every pettifogger ; the disciples of every novice ; and readers only of the ravings of scandal, and caprice, and folly and malice. How must such a people become at length unstable as water, tossed on the waves of anarchy and fanaticism, capable of no other steadfastness but in the anchorage of despotism.

Or if evils so great as these should be escaped, and society should still hold together, how, except by such an education as we claim, shall even a well disposed community be capable of conducting the affairs which in our country devolve upon the agricultural mass ? Our state legislatures transact the legislation of the country. The agricultural population are the law-makers of the land ! How necessary that they should be educated at least capable of forming a wise judgment upon those high matters which for good and evil must be submitted to them, so that the voice of the people may never distract or disturb the pursuits of men, may ever promote the well-being of the people.

That good state of society which shall welcome improvement and reject innovation, is partly provided for in the very condition of agricultural life. The farm house, the rural neighborhood and township, are the least favorable spots for *agitation*. The solitary farm-house, and especially the field, give the fire time to go out, if it has begun to kindle from the coals of some distant furnace. In a word, the solitariness and toil of an agricultural life favor the recovery of men to their sober senses, if they have been at any time disturbed, and especially secure sound sense and discretion to a studious, reflecting and virtuous people.

A well read and studious, virtuous yeomanry is the best security which any country can enjoy against the agitations to which society is exposed. *We* must complete what our forefathers begun. Our forefathers were readers of the folios and quartos of the seventeenth century, students at their own fire sides, and under the summer shades of their own dwellings, of profoundest writers on politics, morals and religion; training up their children around them to all that was lovely and of good report. Such men were able to found a government. Such men would be able to preserve it, if they were spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Let us not imagine that our plans can confer that power, because they enable the agricultural population to master the spelling book and read the newspaper. Not until we regain the domestic studies of our fathers, and their virtues too, can we feel sure of retaining and bequeathing our inheritance.

It is impossible in *our* country and in *our* times to dismiss the demand of *duty*, without regarding other nations. If duty requires us to regard all people as our brethren, and to seek their best interests, then does it require of that class of our people, which form the mass, corresponding education. If it be our duty to bear our part as people in the great work of blessing mankind, is it not our duty to require a suitable education, and especially of the rural population? The tree for the healing of the nations must receive its chief nourishment from this soil. The world demands and gives occasion for great and growing improvements.

In the *first place*, the motives which are to impel us can be derived only from the history of all ages. If our country aids in the moral improvement of the world, earnestly and perseveringly, it will be because it understands and feels the motives which human experience has wrought out, in the progress of six thousand years. But tell us, if you can, how the idle and the ignorant, the reader who reads not, or who reading considers not, can be governed by the motives of all history — can be guided by the lights of all history?

We may be wiser than the ancients if we will, and be the dispensers of blessings which the ancients did not give to the world; but not by the magic of being born two or

three thousand years later, not by some modern instinct of wisdom and benevolence ; but by diligence in exploring the experience of ages — by the modesty and the trust in God, for a work which has baffled the self-sufficient wisdom of all nations and all times.

Under this restriction, I am not disposed to check the aspirations of the American people ; even when they imagine themselves entrusted with the destinies of mankind. True, they are but an example of the ludicrous, when they boast of principles yet unimproved ; as if they had undergone this test of experiment ; but in proportion as they are found studying deeply the history of man and especially the word of God, we will bid speed to the humblest agriculturist, nor accuse him of folly and presumption when he appears to be a benefactor of the world. The most retired farmer so employed, though in the most obscure retreat, hidden in some narrow valley, is nobly occupied, for himself, his family, his country and the world. In that calm retreat, it were well to gratify his curiosity and to feed his mind with knowledge ; but he is more nobly occupied — searching the deepest recesses of human nature, he comes back with the wisdom of all ages, and acting wisely and piously in his own proper sphere, the star light of his wisdom and piety will be shed forth to distant nations and distant times.

In closing this lecture I have only to insist on what has been more than once assumed, that the education of an agricultural population must be *Christian*, leaving the explanation of the term to the scriptures from which it is derived. Christianity alone can keep alive the interest in a state of society where stimulants are so much lacking, or give the right direction where a deep interest is felt. I shall not enlarge on this point ; but commend it to the conscience and the heart of this audience and the American people, by referring to the voice of experience, which remarkably appeals to us from two countries peculiarly entitled to a hearing.

Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, abetted with the dignity and influence of royalty, the philosophic infidelity of Voltaire, and under their malign auspices, both literature and government, seemed to have made a league as for the destruction of Christianity, so for its banishment from all influence upon the education of the people. The ex-

periment was tried and as it came on and went forward, the release of mankind from the ancient superstitions was heralded as the means of renovating the world, and from the parent and the school-master, by ridicule or by force the Christian Scriptures were wrested, not only in France, but in some proportion over all Europe and America. Our agricultural population, remote as it might seem from the centres of infidelity felt the shock, and our rural districts, even the most remote, whether for quiet or for shame or for indifference became less than before the seats of instruction. The schoolmaster and the parents, the agents who alone reach the people, were freed from the claim of giving a christian education. The effect of this grand mistake, where it was complete, was such as to astound the world; can it be that its evil consequences did not extend to all countries who were in any degree guilty of the error; that infidelity in whatever degree has hindered and marred the labor of the schoolmaster and the parent amidst our agricultural population?

And here it is that the voice of experience has come to our aid, from Prussia, the distinct and loud claim of christian instruction, carried down from the throne to every rural district, to the parent and the schoolmaster. The first demand of the present Prussian system, is, on religion and morality, established on the positive truths of Christianity. Yes, and that the claims might follow the tract of the error, even as it were the claim of repentance.

Another philosopher follows after the lapse of eightyfive years the pathway of that remarkable man, that anti-christian philosopher, who by the invitation of Frederick and the permission of his own sovereign went breathing out the prophecy of extermination against Christianity in all lands, and for how different a purpose; to behold in Prussia the benefit of christian instruction, and to send abroad to France and the world the claim that the parents and the school-master must bless the rising youth of all countries by the lessons of the christian faith. Yes, let it never be forgotten, the successor of Voltaire, at the court of the successor of Frederick the Great, has not come to plot the destruction of Christianity, to sneer at its professions, to rejoice at its parting downfall; but to send home the demand for Christian instruction in all the rural districts



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